Bombay and Shanghai on 13 December, 1991 in New Delhi. The Agreement came into force on the date of its signature.

(b) Arising out of this Agreement, the Chinese Consulate General in Bombay was formally inaugurated on December, 7, 1992 and the Indian Consulate General in Shanghai was formally inaugurated on January, 16, 1993.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

Defend Kashmir Campaign by INCA

2288. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU. Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian National Congress of America (INCA) has lately spearheaded a campaign named "Defend Kashmir campaign" in the US, in reply to recent Pakistani propaganda unleashed by Pak-Prime Minister, pointing out that most of the disturbances in Kashmir were attributable to Pakistan's deliberate instigations; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto, by way of lending support to the campaign by the INCA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and answer will be laid on the Table of the House at the earliest.

Exemption from Visa Requirement

2289. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Governments of India and Pakistan had taken a joint decision to exempt curtain categories of people in both the countries from visa requirements for visiting each other's country;

(b) if so, what are the categories which have been so exempted and whether Members of Parliament have also been included in the said categories;

(c) whether Government propose to include the Members of Parliament in this category, if the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the said decision as at (a) above has already been implemented; and

(e) if not, what progress has been made in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (e) The India-Pakistan Visa Agreement of 1974 does not exempt any category of people in both the countries from visa requirements for visiting each other's country. However, under the SAARC Visa Exemption Endorstment Facility which has been operational since March 1, 1992, Members of the National Parliaments, Judges of the Supreme Court and Heads of Centrally-aided National Academic Institutions, their accompaning spouses and dtpendon children below the age of 18 years are entitled to visa-free travel within the SAARC region after getting a visa exemption sticker affixed on their passports. The India-Pakistan Visa Agreement is being amended accordingly.

Assault on Indians living in Kuwait

2290. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a spurt in assaults and attacks on Indians living in Kuwait recently;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the so-called J. K. Human Rights movement held a seminar in support of Kashmir separatists there; and

(c) if so, what is the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Some incidents of assault on Indian nationals in

Kuwait have come to notice in recent months.

(b) A group of 3 ladies and a male professor from POK falsely claiming to be from a charitable organisation raising funds for the benefit of people affected by deteriorating economic conditions in POK entered Kuwait in February, but after entry they claimed to be representatives of something called Kashmir Human Right Organisation. they used local platforms for conducting anti-India propaganda. The group has since left Kuwait.

(c) Our Ambassador in Kuwait has expressed our concern to Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry at Pakistani Embassy's misuse of Kuwaiti organisations for anti-India propaganda.

American President's visit to India

2291. SHRI G. PRATHAPPA REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an Invitation has been extended to the American President Mr. Bill Cinton to visit India;

(b) if so, when was the invitation extended;

(c) what is the response of the American President on this invitation;

(d) if not, by when the invitation will be extended and what are the reasons for the delay in extending the invitation; and

(e) by when is the American President likely to visit India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Government will trasmit an invitation at an appropriate time.

(e) Does not arise.

Requirement of Ration Cards for making Passports

2292. SHRI V. RAJESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some Passport officers have made it compulsory to submit the Ration Cards for purposes of the passports;

(b) if so, what will be the fate of those who do not have ration cards;

(c) whether any other proof of residence will be treated as valid by such passport officers;

(d) whether the names in the latest electoral rolls will also be a valid proof of residence, and

(e) what steps are being taken to simplify the procedures for the issurance of passports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (d) Applications for passports need to be accompanied by documentary evidence of proof of address. This could be a photocopy of the applicant's ration card or any other documentary avidence such as the appointment letter of a deputed company on letter head, water tax/telephone bill/electricity bill, running bank account etc.

(e) Government have taken a number of steps to simplify procedures for the issue of passports including supply of forms through select post offices, availability of most miscellaneous services at any Passport Offices, delivery of first-time passports in person or by post, processing of applications on a first-cum-first served basis except in genuine amergencies removal of erstwhile restriction on ravel to South Africa, issuance of a weekly press released by Passport Offices to indicate the application date being covered and streamlining of procedures with regard to lost/damaged passports.